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## Synopsis of Important Articles.

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**Jesus of Nazareth.\***—Among “liberal Christians” the interest in Jesus Christ and regard for him as a personal being seem to be dying out. Yet the liberalizing and progressive tendencies among men to-day come originally and directly from him. Nevertheless some regard his influence as having vanished and others think that he stands in the way of progress. “I have no idea that this way of thinking can endure.” The man who exerts this marvelous and unceasing power over humanity in favor of progress ought to be to us the most interesting of beings. “While I am far from thinking it essential to the Christian character that it should be formed by the direct personal influence of Jesus, I hold it to be a very great loss when he is ignored as outgrown and obsolete, he who is the original and still richest source of inspiration, of truth, of love, and of power.” They who seek for a new ideal would do well to realize the ideal actualized in him before looking for a new one. In seeking to know more about Jesus, we turn to the Gospels.

1. What is their origin? They were probably written not by any of the immediate adherents of Jesus, but by persons who derived their information from them. They are collections of memorabilia, compilations of memoranda. The fourth Gospel is best explained as written by a younger friend and disciple of John, from whom he learned the events and the kernel of the sayings. The spirit of Jesus inspired this writer.
2. What is their character? They show on the face of them certain strong marks of being accounts of events that actually occurred:
  - 1) They contain copious references to times, places and persons. Grant that there is fable in the Gospels, to infer from this fabulous element that they are wholly of this character is irrational. The exaggerated and fictitious only prove the existence of an underlying basis of truth. Where there is smoke there must be fire.
  - 2) The narratives admit of being thoroughly sifted by a candid and fearless criticism. The miracles of healing admit of a natural interpretation—the supremacy of spirit over flesh. “In believing in Jesus the people were believing in God.” Jesus emphasized their faith, not any peculiar gift he had in healing.
  - 3) The extraordinary power of characterization as revealed in the Gospels; e. g., Martha and Mary. Only a Shakspeare could have *invented* such figures. Take Jesus—portrayed by no mortal hand. Nature, God himself, wrote between the lines of the narrators. It is in the perfection of his human nature that his divinity consists. We cannot afford to neglect him. His personal influence is still here determining the course of human history with increasing power as he becomes better understood—born to be the Conqueror and Re-creator of the world.

The spirit of the article is of the loftiest kind. The writer is a man of spiritual insight and profound thought. He reasons in apothegms, if he reasons at all. Much of what he says is acceptable to every devout mind and worthy of the careful consideration of religious iconoclasts. But he is on untenable ground. His language, however lofty, has, even in its most beautiful cadences, a hollow and unsatisfying echo of the truth. His arguments mean more than he would have them mean. As a devout student of the Evangelists he is constrained to say, “My Lord and my God.”

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**The Image and the Stone.†**—Nebuchadnezzar is interesting to us because of his relation to God’s chosen people. God makes him His minister and grants him a vision. Of this vision concerning the Image and the Stone we seek a sym-

\* By Dr. W. H. Furness, in *The Unitarian Review*, July, 1889. Pp. 47-66.

† By Josiah Gilbert in *The Expositor*, June, 1889. Pp. 448-460.

bolic rather than a definite historical meaning. 1) The image is of a man, representing worldly, immovable power; metallic; fashioned by human hand, product of human skill; unassailable except in the feet of clay. The stone is a natural product; of no recognizable or definite shape. The cause of its descent is not observable. Then when it has destroyed the image, it seems to have life, grows, fills the horizon. 2) The destruction is accomplished by striking on the flaw in the image, the mixed iron and clay aptly representing the moral corruption which destroys kingdoms. The image may still stand, apparently untouched, but it is doomed. This does not imply dissolution of order and authority in human affairs, but the overthrow of elements antagonistic to God's kingdom. 3) The stone is not the visible kingdom of Israel, no earthly kingdom. It appears as a simple, unsuspected force, involving great and grand possibilities. It is a kingdom of peace, a mountain unassailable, universal, enduring. It is the divine kingdom of Christ. 4) This marvelous narrative must have as its basis essential truth. It could not have been an invention. It would not have served its purpose, nor were there men who could invent it at the time supposed. It fits into the historical crisis in which the Bible puts it. It was to the king a true revelation of the counsels of God.

An excellently conceived and expressed exposition of this vision from a symbolic point of view.

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**The Ministerial Priesthood.\***—It is admitted on all sides in the church that the church considered as a whole is priestly. But it is also maintained by some that over and above this universal priesthood of all believers there is provision made in the New Testament for a "Ministerial Priesthood," resting on an entirely distinct foundation and clothed with special powers. It is true that ministers share in the priestly powers of the church as a whole, that they are a special order by divine appointment, and that they are in part qualified for its duties by the laying on of hands by their predecessors; but the question is whether there are two lines of grace flowing directly from Christ, one to laymen, the other to ministers, each different in kind and perfectly distinct from the other—or whether laymen and ministers stand in the same relation to Christ and that the privileges and duties of the ministry are concentrated in them only for the sake of a more orderly attainment of ends in which all have an equal interest. In John 20:21-23 ministerial privileges were conferred not on the apostles alone but to the church as a whole, as shown in Lk. 24:33. In James 5:16 a fair interpretation cannot limit confession to the ministry. The use of the word "church" in Mt. 18:15-17 shows that the entire body is referred to. In the account of the descent of the Spirit in Acts 2:1, an attempt is made to limit it to the twelve. This is manifestly impossible, among other reasons, in view of verse 17. The conclusion is that there is no ground for the theory of two original lines of grace or that one line of grace flows to the church through the ministry. This is further established by the fact that the Christian minister is nowhere called "priest" in the New Testament. While other Old Testament terms were applied to the church, this one was carefully dropped. Therefore there is a ministerial priesthood in the church only as ministers partake of the universal priesthood of all believers. Ministers have no pre-eminence over the church except as servants of the church, returning to it the favors which through the church have been bestowed on them.

An able discussion of this important question, remarkable for breadth and candor, but yielding to the advocates of apostolic succession more than many would be willing to allow.

\* By Rev. Professor W. Milligan, D.D., in *The Expositor*, July, 1889, pp. 1-23.